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Monday, July 16, 2007

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On Monday, April 2, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and I were in Exeter, Tulare County, to visit the LoBue Brothers packinghouse and citrus grower Stan Cosart's orange groves. Governor Schwarzenegger has moved aggressively to provide relief for those impacted by the freeze but federal citrus-freeze aid could be from five to six months away.

Senator Feinstein inspected both damaged and undamaged oranges at LoBue's facility. She is well aware of the scope of this problem. "About 50 percent of the oranges in this packing plant are good for nothing," Feinstein said. Just in terms of the citrus crop, the freeze has caused about \$800 million in damage so far, said Joel Nelsen, the president of [California Citrus Mutual](#), a producers trade group. County crop loss estimates from the freeze now exceed \$1.4 billion dollars. A bill in Congress covers crop losses for the past three years of extreme weather events.

For the Central Valley, it could mean aid for dairy farmers who lost animals in last summer's scorching heat and for citrus, avocado and other commodity growers recovering from the freeze.

This Senate-approved legislation calls for:

- \$2.09 billion for disaster-related crop losses sustained in 2005-07
- \$1.498 billion for disaster-related livestock losses in 2005-07
- \$100 million for small business and farmworker assistance

- \$95 million for dairy losses
- \$40 million to replace and rehabilitate damaged trees.

Senator Feinstein said the amount of aid will likely be reduced during conference with the House.

After we saw the groves, the Senator and I sat down for a working lunch with about two dozen state and local leaders to discuss the extent and repercussions of the freeze, which destroyed about half of California's citrus crops.

"It's interesting for me to come this day and see the actual result," Senator Feinstein said of the damage caused by widespread freezing temperatures that struck the state between January 11-17.

As always, thank you for your support. Feel free to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

A.G. Kawamura

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(Photos: Courtesy of Senator Feinstein's Office and R. Tse, CDFA)

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